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ABSTRACT

The Resource Center at the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL), Inc., provides direct services to clients both within and outside AEL, as well as serving as a repository and distribution center for educational materials. Three main objectives were identified: to discover the extent to which staff use current components of the Resource Center; to investigate the expectations of staff regarding electronic conversion of existing Resource Center components; and to investigate staff predilections for electronic journals, newsletters, and other electronic resources. This report summarizes findings from the third assessment of the Resource Center, which focused on AEL staff's perceptions of needed services and their frequency of use. The report presents findings along with subsequent conclusions and recommendations from the survey administered to AEL staff members in October 1999. Surveys were distributed to all 96 AEL staff members, with a 52% usable return rate. Findings are discussed in terms of the main sections of the survey, which include: (1) general information such as respondent's location, years of employment at AEL, and favorite places to find information; (2) specific use of Resource Center services; (3) expectations for electronic conversion of existing components of the Resource Center; (4) ideas for improving the Resource Center; and (5) ideas for better serving staff outside the Charleston, West Virginia, office. The survey and "Completed Evaluation Standards Checklist" are appended. (AEF)

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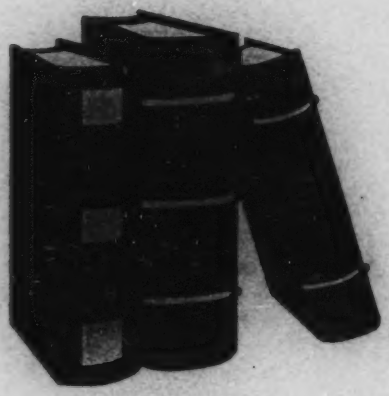

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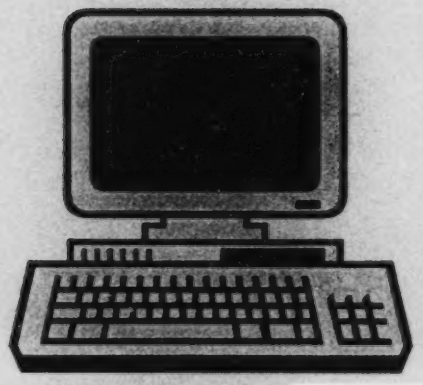
January 2000



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Survey of Staff Perceptions of the AEL Resource Center

Kimberly S. Cowley

January 2000

AEL, Inc.
Charleston, WV

AEL's mission is to link the knowledge from research with the wisdom from practice to improve teaching and learning. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. For these same four states, it operates both a Regional Technology in Education Consortium and the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center and operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ii

INTRODUCTION 1

METHODOLOGY 2

FINDINGS 3

- General 3
- Use of the Resource Center 4
- Expectations for Electronic Conversion of Resource Center Components 7
- Ideas for Improving the Resource Center 8
- Ideas for Better Serving Staff Outside the Charleston Office 9

CONCLUSIONS 10

RECOMMENDATIONS 11

REFERENCES 12

APPENDIXES

- A: 1999 Resource Center Survey
- B: Completed Evaluation *Standards* Checklist

TABLES

1: Frequencies and Percentages for Top Three Places Staff Look for Information 3

2: Frequencies and Percentages for Using Various Resources 5

3: Frequencies and Percentages for Using Specific Services or Databases 6

4: Frequencies and Percentages for Desired On-Line Resources 7

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Resource Center at AEL, Inc., has been in operation since 1966, providing direct services to clients both within and outside AEL, as well as serving as a repository and distribution center for educational materials. Resource Center goals include (1) providing easy access to information and prompt responses to requests for assistance from educators and education stakeholders and (2) developing and maintaining a system for responding to clients' requests.

The Resource Center has gone through several reorganizations in an attempt to keep services as up-to-date and useful as possible to both staff and external clients. As part of this commitment to constant monitoring and improvement, several evaluations have been conducted of the Resource Center operations and services. This report summarizes findings from the third assessment of the Resource Center, which focused on AEL staff's perceptions of needed services and their frequency of use. The purpose of this report is to present findings, along with subsequent conclusions and recommendations, from a 1999 survey administered to AEL staff members.

In September 1999, Resource Center staff met with an AEL evaluator to design the survey. Three main objectives were identified: (1) to discover the extent to which staff use current components of the Resource Center; (2) to investigate the expectations of staff regarding electronic conversion of existing Resource Center components; and (3) to investigate staff predilections for electronic journals, newsletters, and other electronic resources. After undergoing several revisions, the survey was pilot tested with five staff members. Their minor modifications were incorporated into the final version, which included five main sections: (1) general information such as respondent's location, years of employment at AEL, and favorite places to find information; (2) specific use of Resource Center services; (3) expectations for electronic conversion of existing components of the Resource Center; (4) ideas for improving the Resource Center; and (5) ideas for better serving staff outside the Charleston office.

Surveys were distributed to all 96 AEL staff members on September 27, and were to be returned by October 11. Staff at the Charleston office received their surveys through interoffice routing, while those in other locations received mailed copies. A follow-up e-mail was sent on October 5, reminding staff of the upcoming deadline for submitting completed surveys. Responses were received from 51 staff members: 50 completed surveys and an e-mail message by a staff member declining to participate due to recent employment status, resulting in a 52 percent usable return rate.

Key findings. Staff indicated their main source for finding needed information was the Internet, followed by colleague assistance. Approximately 70% indicated they occasionally contacted the Resource Center for information, but an additional 18% indicated no contact. Books and journals were the most used resources, by about half of the respondents; other resources were never used by 49% to 85%. The most frequently used service was information searches; others were rarely used by a majority of the staff.

Staff expressed a need for various resources and services not currently offered by the Resource Center. Frequently mentioned suggestions included an electronic card catalog, electronic journals and databases, additional assistance with requests and information searches, orientations for new staff, training sessions on new technologies, additional print materials, and heightened awareness of Resource Center offerings. Other suggestions for improvement dealt with making the Resource Center facilities more user-friendly and pleasant.

Conclusions. (1) The Resource Center currently maintains a variety of holdings, services, and databases, many of which more than half of the staff are not utilizing. These include a video collection, encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, census data, directories, reference books, CSAP and fugitive documents, subject files, interlibrary loan, AEL display, and RC and CSAP databases. It is reasonable to assume that staff keep some of these materials, such as dictionaries or directories, in their offices,

thereby eliminating the need to use the Resource Center, and that not all staff would have a need for some services. However, there still seems to be a vast pool of untapped resources available to staff.

(2) Staff indicate a strong need for ready access to information, and would like the Resource Center to provide services and assistance specifically to internal clients (staff), in addition to external clients. The Resource Center does not currently have in place such a staff-specific goal or objective. (3) Staff awareness and usage of the Resource Center have declined as AEL has grown and additional staff have been brought on board. This decline has been exacerbated by the creation of satellite offices and the practice of telecommuting, leading to the outcome of almost 20% of the current staff not having any contact with the Resource Center.

(4) Staff are increasingly turning to the Internet for finding information, rather than locating such material through the Resource Center. This growing trend for utilizing electronic media will play a major role in the revision of current and development of new Resource Center services. (5) In their reporting of current electronic media, staff have indicated they are familiar with technological innovations and are ready to experiment with updated electronic versions of current Resource Center services and materials.

(6) Based on staff responses, it seems that in-service training sessions for new Internet or electronic services would be valued. (7) There seems to be a clear indication of the need for additional services to staff that further enhance current assistance and services provided by the Resource Center. (8) Attention needs to be given to the current facilities, which seem to be less than desirable for some staff.

(9) Overall, the climate now seems to be right for change within the Resource Center. Staff are already utilizing Internet services and electronic databases, along with print materials, to provide needed information. Therefore, Resource Center usage should increase as it begins changing over to an electronic platform, which staff can utilize with a click of a button, no matter where they physically reside.

Recommendations. (1) When revising Resource Center goals and objectives, incorporate the provision of services and assistance to AEL staff specifically, in addition to external clients. (2) Offer awareness sessions or find other ways to inform all clients, both internal and external, of currently available materials and services. (3) Begin exploring electronic versions of current holdings and services, keeping in mind the need to keep materials up-to-date and offer information on current "hot" topics.

(4) Begin investigating the potential of further collaborating with other libraries to incorporate additional services into an expanded Resource Center. (5) In-house training sessions should be offered to staff on an as-needed basis for new Internet or electronic services, especially electronic databases, as they are implemented. (6) Develop and maintain an electronic card catalog of all Resource Center holdings that staff can access via the intranet from any networked station.

(7) Begin building a collection of electronic journals for staff to use via the intranet, starting with the two most requested, *Education Week* and *Educational Leadership*. (8) Improve services to staff by increased assistance in information searches. Consider hiring additional staff (as needed) to assist staff and external clients with requests. (9) Rethink ways to physically make the Resource Center a more user-friendly and pleasant place to work, given current space and fiscal constraints.

(10) It seems likely that there is much outdated material currently in the Resource Center, which needs to be sifted through and purged. Further, there are many materials currently available that staff are not accessing. Resource Center staff need to somehow showcase these items, along with potential applicability to staff. (11) As Resource Center staff begin implementing services and materials on an electronic platform, they should constantly monitor staff usage and make adjustments accordingly. (12) In an effort to increase awareness of and communication with the Resource Center, consider implementing an informal monthly update that could advertise new services or materials, list upcoming training topics and dates, and provide short scenarios of how the Resource Center helped fill a need for some individuals that others might have as well.

INTRODUCTION

The Resource Center at AEL, Inc., has been in operation since 1966. The Resource Center provides direct services to clients both within and outside AEL, as well as serving as a repository and distribution center for educational materials. Once referred to as "the heart of the Lab" by the OERI External Review Team (as cited by Levin in Hambrick, 1992), the Resource Center was placed under the School Services Center during the 1996-2000 Regional Educational Laboratory contract. Two of the School Services Center goals are directly related to the Resource Center: (1) to provide easy access to information and prompt response to requests for assistance from educators and education stakeholders in the region and (2) to develop and maintain a system for responding to clients' general requests for R&D-based assistance (AEL Technical Proposal, 1995). The Resource Center is now physically housed on the second floor of AEL's Charleston, West Virginia, location.

The Resource Center has gone through several reorganizations in an attempt to keep services as up-to-date and useful as possible to both staff and external clients. As part of this commitment to constant monitoring and improvement, several evaluations have been conducted of the Resource Center operations and services: one by an outside consultant (Brickley, 1987) and one by an AEL staff member (Hambrick, 1992). As well, three on-site consultations have taken place: one in June 1999 by Donna Lewis, the director of library services at the University of Charleston; one in July 1999 by Dr. Judith Arnold, formerly of Western Michigan University; and one in September 1999 by Karen Goff, West Virginia Library Commission.

Further, a sample of Resource Center clients took part in an overall survey of AEL service clients in 1998. Conclusions from that survey found that "AEL services are perceived to be of high quality, and recipients of services are well satisfied with the services. Services are perceived to have substantial impact upon educational outcomes, including selected student outcomes" (Western Michigan University, 1999, p. 28).

This report summarizes findings from the third assessment of the Resource Center, which focused on AEL staff's perceptions of needed services and their frequency of use. The purpose of this report is to present findings, along with subsequent conclusions and recommendations, from the survey administered to AEL staff members in October 1999. The primary audience is Resource Center staff, for use in refining current operations and defining new services. Other potential audiences include AEL staff, funding agency officials, or others interested in institutional-level information centers.

METHODOLOGY

In September 1999, Resource Center staff met with an AEL evaluation staff member to design a survey to gather staff perceptions of the Resource Center. Three main objectives were identified for the survey: (1) to discover the extent to which staff use current components of the Resource Center; (2) to investigate the expectations of staff regarding electronic conversion of existing Resource Center components; and (3) to investigate staff predilections for electronic journals, newsletters, and other electronic resources. After undergoing several revisions by Resource Center staff and evaluators, the survey was pilot tested with five staff members; their minor modifications were then incorporated into the final version.

The survey included five main sections: (1) general information such as respondent's location, years of employment at AEL, and favorite places to find information; (2) specific use of Resource Center services; (3) expectations for electronic conversion of existing components of the Resource Center; (4) ideas for improving the Resource Center; and (5) ideas for better serving staff outside the Charleston office.

The final survey was five pages (front side only) in length, and was printed on white paper. A cover memo, printed on yellow paper, was attached to the survey, urging all staff members to complete and return their surveys. Surveys were distributed to all 96 AEL staff members on September 27, and were to be returned by October 11. Staff at the Charleston office received their surveys through interoffice routing, while those in other locations received mailed copies. A follow-up e-mail was sent on October 5, reminding staff of the upcoming deadline for submitting completed surveys.

Out of the 96 surveys distributed, responses were received from 51 staff members: 50 completed surveys and an e-mail message by a staff member declining to participate due to recent employment status. As a result, there was a 52 percent usable return rate.

Once the surveys were received, a database was created using the SPSS Windows software program. Data were then entered, checked, and cleaned. Appropriate descriptive statistics were generated for each of the selected-response survey items. Open-ended items were categorized and summarized by evaluation staff.

FINDINGS

The findings of the September 1999 Resource Center survey are presented under the five main survey sections.

General

Staff were first asked to indicate whether they worked at the Charleston office, the Arlington office, or telecommuted. All 50 responded: 39 (78%) were from Charleston, 4 (8%) were from Arlington, and 7 (14%) were telecommuters. The average length of employment was 7 years, with a standard deviation of 7.5 years. The minimum length was 1 month, the maximum was 27 years, and the most frequent responses were 8 months and 1.5 years (four responses each).

Next, staff were asked to name the three top places where they found the information necessary to do their jobs. Forty-nine provided their first place to look for information, 48 their second place, and 41 their third place to find needed information. Table 1 shows that the Internet/ Web was staff's first and second choice to find needed information, followed by colleague assistance.

Table 1:
Frequencies and Percentages for Top Three Places Staff Look for Information

Sites	First Place (N=49)		Second Place (N=48)		Third Place (N=41)	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Books/journals/files	5	10%	8	17%	9	22%
Colleagues/experts	6	12%	4	8%	11	27%
ERIC	7	14%	9	19%	2	5%
Internet/Web	27	55%	13	27%	6	15%
Other libraries	2	4%	4	8%	8	20%
Resource Center	2	4%	10	21%	5	12%

Note: Shading indicates most frequent response.

When all responses were aggregated, the Internet was again the predominant first choice of staff at 33%. The second and third choices were books/journals/files at 16% and colleagues at 15%. Fourth and fifth choices followed closely, with ERIC at 13% and the Resource Center at 12%. The last response was other libraries at 10%.

Staff were then asked what additional information resources they would like to have to help them do their jobs. Thirty-three provided their first choice of additional information, 17 their second choice, and 4 their third choice of additional information. Due to the low number of responses for second and third place suggestions for resources, findings are presented only for the aggregated version of the data. The most frequently requested resource was various print materials (13, 24%). This category included generic requests for manuals and lab/center products, as well as more specific requests such as a business/travel planner; English and Spanish dictionaries; evaluation instrument resources; MacMillan research handbooks; literature review resources; research syntheses on hot topics; and national, state, and higher education directories.

The second most frequently requested resource was electronic databases (10, 19%). Specific databases included psychlit, education, medline, sociofile, and dissertation abstracts. The third request was a tie between journals and on-line resources (7, 13%), with some overlap, since two responses for more journals specified them as on-line journals. Other on-line resources included a WV legislature site, a Resource Center Web page, encyclopedias, Internet sites, on-line article purchasing, and an intranet list of subscription sites. The fourth request was also a tie, between additional librarian-type staff and access to other libraries (6, 11%).

Use of the Resource Center

This section of the survey encompassed a variety of questions targeted at obtaining detailed estimates of usage rates for specific components of the Resource Center. The first question asked staff how frequently they visited the Resource Center since its relocation to the second floor of the Charleston office in October 1998. Of the 50 respondents, 48 provided a response to this item. More than half (27, 56%) indicated occasional use, 20 (42%) indicated no use, and only 1 staff member (2%) indicated frequent use.

The next question asked how often staff visited the Resource Center when it was located on the eighth floor of the Charleston office. Of the 45 respondents, almost two thirds (28, 62%) indicated occasional use, one third (15, 33%) indicated no use, and 2 indicated frequent use (4%).

Staff were then asked how frequently they contacted Resource Center staff (by phone or e-mail) for information or material. Of the 49 respondents, the majority (35, 71%) indicated occasional contact, 9 (18%) indicated no contact, and 5 (10%) indicated frequent contact.

The next series of questions asked staff to indicate the frequency of their use of a variety of Resource Center holdings. Table 2 shows that, for 10 of the 12 items, staff most frequently indicated no use (from 49% to 85%). For the remaining items (journals/periodicals/newsletters and books for check-out), staff most frequently indicated occasional use (54% and 49%, respectively). The only items with more than 10% frequent usage by staff were journals/periodicals/newsletters at 19% and dictionaries at 14%.

Table 2:
Frequencies and Percentages for Using Various Resources

Item	Often		Occasionally		Never	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Video collection N=48	0	0%	7	15%	41	85%
Journals/newsletters N=48	9	19%	26	54%	13	27%
Books for check-out N=49	4	8%	24	49%	21	43%
Encyclopedias N=48	1	2%	6	13%	41	85%
Dictionaries N=49	7	14%	7	14%	35	71%
Atlases N=48	1	2%	14	29%	33	69%
Census data N=47	1	2%	13	28%	33	70%
Directories N=49	3	6%	22	45%	24	49%
Reference books N=48	4	8%	18	38%	26	54%
CSAP documents N=49	3	6%	12	25%	34	69%
Fugitive documents N=48	1	2%	16	33%	31	65%
Subject files N=49	1	2%	22	45%	26	53%

Note: Shading indicates most frequent response.

In trying to further pinpoint which staff were utilizing these resources, the data file was split into three groups for the Charleston respondents: those with less than 1 year up to 5 years of employment at AEL, those with more than 5 years up to 10 years, and those with more than 10 years of employment. For the first group, response patterns were identical to the full group. For the second group, staff most frequently indicated that they often used journals/newsletters; occasionally used directories, reference books, and subject files; and never used the remaining resources. Finally, respondents in the third group most frequently indicated occasional use of journals/newsletters, books, dictionaries, atlases, census data, and directories; with no use of the remaining items. In all groups, the largest percentage of respondents (50% to 78%) indicated that they never used the videos, encyclopedias, reference books, CSAP or fugitive documents, or subject files.

Staff were then asked to name specific information resources, currently unavailable in the Resource Center, to which they would like access. Nineteen staff responded to this item. Four (21%) staff suggested electronic databases, 3 (16%) requested on-line resources, and 3 others were unsure. Two (11%) suggested ideas pertaining to newspapers, such as maintaining copies

of capitol city newspapers from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, or a directory of newspapers; 2 others requested additional journals. The remaining 5 staff members suggested the following: research syntheses, access to university libraries, training videos, storing microfiche in the Resource Center, and literature on family involvement in education.

The next five questions asked staff how frequently they had used specific services or databases since October 1998. Table 3 shows that almost half (43%) reported they occasionally requested information searches. However, for the remaining four items, more than two thirds of the respondents indicated they never used the services or databases.

Table 3:
Frequencies and Percentages for Using Specific Services or Databases

Service/Database	Often		Occasionally		Never	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Information searches N=49	8	16%	21	43%	20	41%
Interlibrary loan N=49	2	4%	13	27%	34	69%
AEL display N=48	0	0%	12	25%	36	75%
RC documents N=49	1	2%	15	31%	33	67%
CSAP documents N=49	1	2%	9	18%	39	80%

Note: Shading indicates most frequent response.

Next, staff were asked if they were familiar with the CSAP document database. Of the 49 respondents, almost half (22, 45%) responded positively. These 22 respondents were then asked if the database was relevant and timely enough to justify its presence on the intranet. Nine of the 22 (41%) replied positively, with justifications such as its relevance as the research and development foundation for lab work, the extensiveness of the database, and the utility of the resources. Thirteen (59%) replied negatively, indicating the material was outdated, of limited interest, or available through other sources.

Staff were then asked to identify needed services that the Resource Center was not providing. Of the 21 responses, about a fourth (6, 29%) were related to on-line services, including a client address book, a listing of useful sites, a roster of all available resources, access to Quality Education Data and university databases, and article ordering. Other frequently mentioned topics (4, 19% each) were for a staff person to either provide assistance or independently conduct information searches and for enhanced awareness of Resource Center offerings, via an orientation for new staff, a pamphlet listing available services, a listing of current journal holdings, and announcements of new materials by content area to interested staff. Other suggestions included a centralized database of all Resource Center holdings that staff could access

independently, interlibrary loan services, National Center for Education Statistics data sets on CD-ROM (with user documentation and technical reports), market scan assistance, research syntheses, and reviews of current studies and publications.

Expectations for Electronic Conversion of Resource Center Components

This section began by asking staff if the Resource Center should continue maintaining hard copies of CSAP documents, since most were available through other means. Only 32 of the 50 respondents answered this question, with more than half (19, 59%) replying negatively. Of the 13 accompanying comments, though, the general consensus favored keeping hard copies, due to ease of accessibility, copy quality compared to microfiche, and demand for high-interest topics. Contrasting viewpoints included space limitations for housing hard copies and the utility of keeping paper copies of outdated materials.

Staff were next asked if they had used on-line journals, newsletters, or newspapers. Thirty-five (75%) of the 47 respondents replied positively. When asked if training would make a difference in their use of on-line resources, 43 responded, with more than three fourths (33, 77%) affirming it would. The next question asked if staff had previously used CD-ROM resources. Forty-six responded, with the majority (36, 78%) indicating previous experience. Staff were then queried as to whether they would be comfortable using reference books (such as *Books in Print*) in an electronic format such as CD-ROM. Of the 46 respondents, almost all (44, 96%) replied positively. When asked if relevant training would be helpful, 43 replied, with more than three fourths (33, 77%) indicating it would be helpful.

Staff were then provided a list of on-line resources and were asked to select those for which AEL should maintain subscriptions. Thirty-nine staff responded to this request. As can be seen in Table 4, by order of frequency, more than 50% of those responding indicated a need for all but two (*Training* and *Journal of Education Finance*) of those listed; in fact, at least 80% indicated a need for *Education Week* and *Educational Leadership*.

Table 4:
Frequencies and Percentages for Desired On-Line Resources

Resource	Freq.	Percent	Resource	Freq.	Percent
Education Week	33	85%	*Chronicle of Higher Ed.*	20	51%
Educational Leadership	31	80%	*Journal of Ed. Policy*	20	51%
Harvard Ed. Review	25	64%	*Training*	14	36%
*Phi Delta Kappa**	25	64%	*Journal of Ed. Finance*	13	33%
School Administrator	22	56%			

*As listed in the survey; actual title is *The Kappan*.

When asked to indicate their top priority for subscription, 29 staff responded. The most frequent resource was *Education Week* (11, 38%), followed by *Educational Leadership* (6, 21%), and *Harvard Educational Review* (4, 14%). Other resources included *Chronicle of Higher Education* (3, 10%), *Journal of Education Policy* (3, 10%), and *Training* (2, 7%).

In addition, staff also were given the option of listing other resources for AEL subscription; 13 did respond to this item. The most frequent responses were for educational research or administration resources (4, 31%) and evaluation resources (3, 23%). Other topics included technology, staff development, a business/travel planner, sociofile, and psych abstracts.

The next question asked staff if specific Resource Center collections should be scanned and made accessible on the intranet. Regarding the CSAP document collection, 36 staff responded, with slightly more than half (19, 53%) replying positively. For the Resource Center document collection, again 36 staff responded, with almost two thirds (22, 61%) positive response. For the subject files, 35 responded, with slightly more than half (18, 51%) indicating they should be scanned and placed on the intranet. The last question in this section asked if staff had ever used an electronic card catalog. Of the 46 responding, more than half (27, 59%) responded positively.

Ideas for Improving the Resource Center

When asked for additional ideas for improving the Resource Center, 26 staff provided a variety of responses, some with multiple suggestions. Almost half of the 40 suggestions (16, 40%) related to some aspect of electronic capability. Specific nominations were for electronic access to university libraries, access to various electronic databases, and developing an electronic card catalog of Resource Center holdings. Other related suggestions included an on-line list of available videos and journals, an Internet "starting" page for doing research, linking all components together in one centralized location, an Internet page listing new acquisitions, intranet connections to other resources, increased on-line resources, and expanded capability.

Another frequently mentioned topic was updating older materials and purchasing additional resources (7, 18%). Staff specifically mentioned purchasing new books (including suggested reading on the topic of leadership/management), journals, and electronic subscriptions.

Other suggestions dealt with staffing issues, operations, and facilities. Two comments mentioned additional staff for searching assistance and another suggested more frequent communication from the Resource Center to remind staff of potential uses. Three comments focused on facility issues, including a dislike of the current room housing the Resource Center ("... it is too small and forbidding, eerie, even"), keeping the lights on to let staff know the room is open, and adding a work table. Two suggestions were for orientation/training for new staff and training in general on "what is available and how to access the information."

Two respondents indicated they were too new to AEL to offer any improvement ideas. And, several other comments were offered by various respondents, including increasing technology materials, speeding up the process "on everything," conducting more thorough literature searches, using library catalog software, using "vtls" to link labs, and developing an electronic interlibrary loan form. One respondent suggested that staff define the Resource Center's purposes and tailor it to fulfill those purposes. Finally, one staff member, in commenting on the current utility of the Resource Center, noted that "it's not the heart of the lab it's reported to be, though it could become more relevant and responsive."

Ideas for Better Serving Staff Outside the Charleston Office

Twenty staff responded when asked how the Resource Center could better serve staff outside the Charleston office. By far, the most frequent response was on-line access (11, 55%). This included both electronic versions of resources and an electronic card catalog. One comment seemed to succinctly capture the need for on-line access: "Connect them with on-line resources; the physical presence is not important—quick access to answers is." Other suggestions included more awareness of how an information request is processed and how to get materials accessioned, staff orientation, extended or weekend hours, assistance getting articles or documents from other sources, training on how to use the Library of Congress, the ability to do interlibrary loan from outside locations, accessing journals from individual staff memberships, and creating a section in the Resource Center to house articles and presentations showcasing areas of staff expertise.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions about staff perceptions of the Resource Center can be made from the findings in this report. These conclusions are presented below.

- ★ The Resource Center currently maintains a variety of holdings, services, and databases, many of which more than half of the staff are not utilizing. These include a video collection, encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, census data, directories, reference books, CSAP and fugitive documents, subject files, interlibrary loan, AEL display, and RC and CSAP databases. It is reasonable to assume that staff keep some of these materials, such as dictionaries or directories, in their offices, thereby eliminating the need to use the Resource Center, and that not all staff would have a need for some services. However, there still seems to be a vast pool of untapped resources available to staff.

- ★ Staff indicate a strong need for ready access to information, and would like the Resource Center to provide services and assistance specifically to internal clients (staff), in addition to external clients. The Resource Center does not currently have in place such a staff-specific goal or objective.

- ★ Staff awareness and usage of the Resource Center has declined as AEL has grown and additional staff have been brought on board. This decline has been exacerbated by the creation of satellite offices and the practice of telecommuting, leading to the outcome of almost 20% of the current staff not having any contact with the Resource Center.

- ★ Staff are increasingly turning to the Internet for finding information, rather than locating such material through the Resource Center. This growing trend for utilizing electronic media will play a major role in the revision of current and development of new Resource Center services.

- ★ In their reporting of current electronic media, staff have indicated they are familiar with technological innovations and are ready to experiment with updated electronic versions of current Resource Center services and materials.

- ★ Based on staff responses, it seems that in-service training sessions for new Internet or electronic services would be valued.

- ★ There seems to be a clear indication of the need for additional services to staff that further enhance current assistance and services provided by the Resource Center.

- ★ Attention needs to be given to the current facilities, which seem to be less than desirable for some staff.

- ★ Overall, the climate now seems to be right for change within the Resource Center. Staff are already utilizing Internet services and electronic databases, along with print materials, to provide needed information. Therefore, Resource Center usage should increase as it begins changing over to an electronic platform, which staff can utilize with a click of a button, no matter where they physically reside.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions presented earlier, a number of recommendations are suggested for consideration by Resource Center staff.

- ✓ When revising Resource Center goals and objectives, incorporate the provision of services and assistance to AEL staff specifically, in addition to external clients.
- ✓ Offer awareness sessions or find other ways to inform all clients, both internal and external, of currently available materials and services.
- ✓ Begin exploring electronic versions of current holdings and services, keeping in mind the need to keep materials up-to-date and offer information on current "hot" topics.
- ✓ Begin investigating the potential of further collaborating with other libraries to incorporate additional services into an expanded Resource Center.
- ✓ In-house training sessions should be offered to staff on an as-needed basis for new Internet or electronic services, especially electronic databases, as they are implemented.
- ✓ Develop and maintain an electronic card catalog of all Resource Center holdings that staff can access via the intranet from any networked station.
- ✓ Begin building a collection of electronic journals for staff to use via the intranet, starting with the two most requested, *Education Week* and *Educational Leadership*.
- ✓ Improve services to staff by increased assistance in information searches. Consider hiring additional staff (as needed) to assist staff and external clients with requests.
- ✓ Rethink ways to physically make the Resource Center a more user-friendly and pleasant place to work, given current space and fiscal constraints.
- ✓ It seems likely that there is much outdated material currently in the Resource Center, which needs to be sifted through and purged. Further, there are many materials currently available that staff are not accessing. Resource Center staff need to somehow showcase these items, along with potential applicability to staff.
- ✓ As Resource Center staff begin implementing services and materials on an electronic platform, they should constantly monitor staff usage and make adjustments accordingly.
- ✓ In an effort to increase awareness of and communication with the Resource Center, consider implementing an informal monthly update that could advertise new services or materials, list upcoming training topics and dates, and provide short scenarios of how the Resource Center helped fill a need for some individuals that others might have as well.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A:
1999 Resource Center Survey

Survey on the AEL Resource Center in Charleston
September 1999

I. General

A. Where are you located? Charleston ____ Arlington ____ Telecommuter ____

B. How long have you been employed at AEL? _____/_____
(years /months)

As part of your job, you often may need to find information. Please answer the next two questions about where you look for needed information.

C. Name the top three places you turn to when you look for information needed to do your job.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

D. If you had access to additional information resources to help you do your job, what would they be?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

II. Use of the Resource Center (RC)

A. How frequently have you visited the Resource Center since it moved to the 2nd floor of the Charleston office in October 1998?

(Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

B. How frequently did you visit the Resource Center when it was located on the 8th floor of the Charleston office?

(Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

C. How frequently do you contact (phone or e-mail) the Resource Center (or Marilyn Slack/Carole Berry) for information or materials?

(Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

D. Indicate the frequency of your use of the following resources (items 1-6) since October 1998. (Place a check in the appropriate box.)

1. Video Collection.
   The RC has a growing collection of videos which include USDE Satellite Town Meetings on "hot" topics. These videos are available for staff to check out and view.

   (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

2. Journals, Periodicals, Newsletters.
   The RC currently subscribes to 160 journals, periodicals, and newsletters. The newsletters are routed to interested staff. The table of contents of the journals are routed to staff. Journals and periodicals can be checked out to staff for short periods of time. (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

3. Books.

Books that can be checked out (circulated)	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never
Encyclopedias	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never
Dictionaries	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never
Atlases	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never
Census Data	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never
Directories	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never
Reference Books (e.g., Tests in Print)	☐ often	☐ occasionally	☐ never

4. CSAP Documents.
   Communication Service Assistance Program (CSAP) is a collection of R&D products and publications from the regional educational laboratories and other federally funded centers. Publications are from 1986 - 1997, when the service was discontinued.

   (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

5. RC Documents.
   Included in this collection are items published by organizations or agencies in small quantities and having limited distribution ("gray" or "fugitive" literature). These publications typically have no ISBN, ISSN, or Library of Congress number. There are currently more than 3,000 publications in this collection.

   (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

6. RC Subject Files.
   The subject files contain copies of articles, pamphlets, brochures, etc., contributed by staff members on various "hot" topics. These files also contain copies of materials gathered on a topic and sent to clients.

   (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

E. Please name specific information resources, not currently in the Resource Center, to which you would like to have access.

_____

_____

F. How frequently have you used the following services since October 1998?

1. Information searches for staff or clients
   (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never
2. Interlibrary loan (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never
3. AEL display checkout (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

G. How frequently have you used the following databases?

1. RC Documents (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never
2. CSAP Documents (Check one) ☐ often ☐ occasionally ☐ never

H. Are you familiar with the CSAP Document Data Base (see description on page 2)?

☐ yes ☐ no

If you answered yes, please continue to question I. If you answered no, please go to question J.

I. Does the CSAP Documents database have enough relevance/timeliness to justify putting it on the Intranet?

☐ yes (why?) _____

☐ no (why?) _____

J. Please name services not currently performed by the Resource Center that you would like to see added.

_____

_____

III. What are the expectations of staff regarding electronic conversion of existing components of the Resource Center?

A. Most of the CSAP documents are available through the ERIC system, on microfiche, or in automated format. Should the Resource Center continue to maintain hard copies?

☐ yes ☐ no Comment: _____

_____

B. Have you used on-line journals, newsletters, or newspapers?

1. ☐ yes ☐ no

Would training in how to use on-line resources make a difference in your use?

2. ☐ yes ☐ no

C. Have you used resources on CD-ROM before? ☐ yes ☐ no

D. Reference books, such as *Books In Print*, are available in electronic format (e.g., CD-ROM).

1. Will you be comfortable using them in this format? ☐ yes ☐ no
2. Would training be helpful? ☐ yes ☐ no

E. Check the following on-line resources to which you feel AEL should subscribe. Please check all that you wish first. Then circle the **one** resource that represents your top priority for AEL to subscribe to.

____ *Chronicle of Higher Education*
____ *Educational Leadership*
____ *Education Week*
____ *Harvard Educational Review*
____ *Journal of Education Finance*
____ *Journal of Education Policy*
____ *Phi Delta Kappa*
____ *School Administrator*
____ *Training*

Others _____

_____

_____

F. Should the Resource Center scan and make its documents accessible on AEL's Intranet? (Please respond to the following three items.)

1. CSAP Document Collection ☐ yes ☐ no
2. RC Document Collection ☐ yes ☐ no
3. RC Subject Files ☐ yes ☐ no

G. Have you ever used an electronic card catalog? ☐ yes ☐ no

IV. What additional ideas do you have for improving AEL's Resource Center?

V. How can the Resource Center better serve those in Arlington and those who telecommute?

Appendix B:
Completed Evaluation *Standards* Checklist

Citation Form

e Program Evaluation Standards (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

_____ request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
_____ evaluation plan/design/proposal
_____ evaluation contract
__X__ evaluation report
_____ other: _____

o interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint ommittee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

e *Standards* were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

escriptor		The Standard was deemed applicable and to the extent feasible was taken into account.	The Standard was deemed applicable but could not be taken into account.	The Standard was not deemed applicable.	Exception was taken to the Standard.
1	Stakeholder Identification	X			
2	Evaluator Credibility	X			
3	Information Scope and Selection	X			
4	Values Identification	X			
5	Report Clarity	X			
6	Report Timeliness and Dissemination	X			
7	Evaluation Impact	X			
1	Practical Procedures	X			
2	Political Viability			X	
3	Cost Effectiveness	X			
1	Service Orientation	X			
2	Formal Agreements	X			
3	Rights of Human Subjects	X			
4	Human Interactions	X			
5	Complete and Fair Assessment	X			
6	Disclosure of Findings	X			
7	Conflict of Interest	X			
8	Fiscal Responsibility	X			
1	Program Documentation	X			
2	Context Analysis	X			
3	Described Purposes and Procedures	X			
4	Defensible Information Sources	X			
5	Valid Information	X			
6	Reliable Information	X			
7	Systematic Information	X			
8	Analysis of Quantitative Information	X			
9	Analysis of Qualitative Information	X			
10	Justified Conclusions	X			
11	Impartial Reporting	X			
12	Metaevaluation	X			

ame Kimberly S. Cowley Date: 12/22/1999
(typed)
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elation to Document: Author
(e.g., author of document, evaluation team leader, external auditor, internal auditor)

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